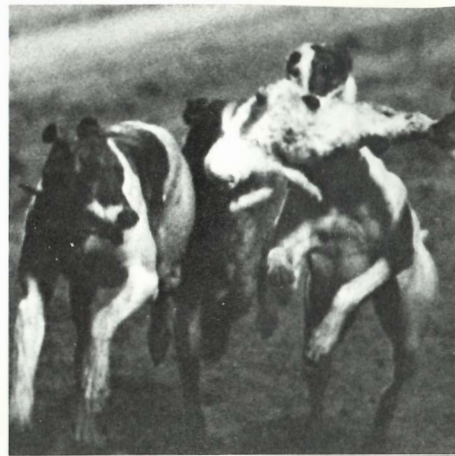


St. Petersburg Times Photos

*A helpless rabbit hangs by its back legs from a mechanical lure (above left) awaiting the release of dogs for a practice race. Near the end of the race the dogs are allowed to catch up with the lure and sink their teeth into the rabbit (above right) to whet their appetites for the next race. After a coursing session on an open field (opposite page), injured rabbits are thrown out to die from their injuries.*

## Promoters Step Up Efforts To Legalize Dog Racing



Dog track promoters have stepped up their efforts to establish new greyhound race tracks throughout the United States. HSUS is convinced there can be no letup in efforts to inform humanitarians of the powerful and well-financed campaigns to legalize dog racing in many states.

Dog racing is one of America's cruellest spectator events, largely because of the training methods used, which include the chasing and tearing apart of live rabbit lures. Greyhounds, the dogs used in professional racing, are trained for the track in an activity called coursing. In coursing a live rabbit is set free in an enclosed field and two or more young, hungry dogs are released to chase it. The rabbit zigzags about the enclosure with little chance of escape. When caught, the rabbit is torn apart and mangled by the dogs.

After five or six coursings the dog is advanced to the schooling track where a live rabbit is hung by its back legs to a mechanical lure, with its head dangling inches from the ground. The lure is whipped around the track with the dogs in hot pursuit. Its eyes bulging and chest pounding, the screaming rabbit watches as the dogs approach. As the dogs near the finish line they are allowed to catch the helpless rabbit. If the rabbit is not killed by the first group of dogs it is pulled around the track again with fresh dogs in pursuit.

Dog owners and trainers believe the taste of fresh blood excites the dog into chasing the lure with more determination than a dog trained on dead bait. Although most owners and trainers will not admit it, virtually all racing dogs are trained with live rabbits. Ben Jacques, who retired after training greyhounds in Florida for 40 years, said, "There is

no other way to train the dogs without using living rabbits."

Death is a by-product of greyhound racing. The dog who falls behind the pack writes its own death sentence. Approximately 50% of the greyhounds bred for racing are killed before they ever see a track because they fail to demonstrate competitive characteristics. Most retired racing dogs are destroyed because they do not make suitable pets. The dogs are raised in such a socially deprived environment that it is difficult for them to relate with people. Also, their killer instinct forces them to bite anything that moves, including people.

Although private veterinarians and local humane societies in the vicinity of training farms report a high volume of greyhound euthanasia, HSUS suspects some breeders and trainers kill the animals themselves to save veterinary fees and to avoid chastisement by shelter personnel.

Greyhound racing is legal in nine states. Promoters boast that they are planning or have active legislation to legalize the so-called sport in 11 other states. Legislatures in West Virginia and California are now actively considering greyhound racing bills.

The Golden State Greyhound Assn. (GSGA) has recently mounted a well-financed campaign to legalize gambling on greyhound racing in California. In GSGA literature Association President George G. Hardie declared: "Greyhound racing is coming to California. Either with a legislative bill in 1975 or a ballot initiative in 1976. We have members in every community in California working toward this goal. The battle lines have been drawn. Now is the time to get involved."

Hardie also claims that the humanitarian protest against dog racing in California is settled because the bill now pending before the state legislature outlaws the use of live animals while training greyhounds in California and requires that farms be set up for retired racing dogs.

HSUS West Coast Regional Director Frantz Dantzler called Hardie's argument "fallacious."

"Most greyhounds raced in the United States are trained in Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas because of weak anti-cruelty laws and high rabbit populations," he said. "What is going to keep the California dog racing syndicate from importing dogs trained in those states?"

Dantzler said the dog retirement farms set up in California would not help dogs that are killed before they get to

the track. Only the best dogs of the litter are raced. Approximately 50% of the litter are found unsuitable for racing and are killed. Dantzler also expressed concern that owners would ship dogs out of California for racing at other tracks prior to their retirement to avoid having to keep them at expensive retirement farms.

The bill to legalize betting on greyhound racing (California Assembly Bill 455) was introduced by State Assemblyman Leon Ralph of Los Angeles. In a letter to Dantzler, Ralph said, "I feel that my bill establishes new standards in the humane treatment of greyhounds, and hopefully will be used as a model in legislation in other greyhound racing states."

In vocal support of his bill, Ralph repeatedly states that the legalization of an estimated \$1 billion gambling business in the state will create thousands of jobs and furnish millions of dollars in tax revenue for the state.

In a Jan. 19, 1975 editorial opposing Ralph's bill, the Sacramento Bee stated: "California had legalized betting on greyhound races in the 1930s and it became so corrupt that it was discontinued. There is ample reason to believe racketeers and hoodlums would again try to move in on dog racing if betting were legalized."

The Bee also carried a news article on Jan. 26, 1975, describing Hardie as an ex-harness driver who claims to have gambled up to \$5,000 a night at various California horse racing tracks. The article said Hardie appeared in Sacramento over a year ago to work with Ralph on the greyhound racing bill. Hardie is quoted as saying that he wrote the bill himself with the help of state employees. Hardie also told the Bee that he gave \$1,000 to Ralph's reelection campaign.

HSUS's efforts to protest Hardie's campaign to legalize greyhound gambling in California succeeded in his making the following statement in a letter to Virginia Handley, a humanitarian from San Francisco, Calif.: "I am damn tired of people opposing our greyhound legislation who don't know the first thing about it and make no effort to educate themselves. At the top of the list is The Humane Society of the United States."

Across the nation, the Florida First District Court of Appeal publicly sanctioned the use of live rabbits in the training of greyhounds when it ruled in March that a greyhound training track near Ocala, Fla., could resume using the animal in training dogs. The court dis-

missed an injunction against Richard D. Kiper and the Central Florida Greyhound College Inc., supporting Kiper's claim that it was necessary to use live rabbits in training greyhounds. The court said since the use of live rabbits was necessary, it did not violate the state law that only prohibits activities that are "unnecessarily" cruel.

In a letter to the attorney general of Florida, HSUS Vice President and General Counsel Murdaugh Stuart Madden urged a rehearing of the court's decision. "The HSUS finds it deplorable that the Florida legislature has tacitly made this barbaric practice exempt from the application of your state anti-cruelty laws," he said.

Madden said that the court had seized upon the word "unnecessarily" in the law and in a "bizarre ruling" admitted that it was necessary to use live rabbits to effectively train greyhounds. "The court presumably concluded that if it is necessary to the box office, necessary to the bloodthirsty fan, and necessary to the promoter, then the greyhound industry is exempt from the state's anti-cruelty law," he said.

HSUS will continue to fight the promoters and cruelties of greyhound racing. The Society urges all humanitarians to voice their opinions to state officials and local community leaders when attempts are made to legalize dog racing in their states. HSUS also suggests humanitarians form local committees to expose greyhound racing to public scrutiny. Contact HSUS for information and expert assistance on the practices involved in greyhound racing. □

